Provincial

CHILD CARE

Council

2003/2004 Annual Report

November 2004

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Report from the Chair

Provincial Child Care Council's 14 members have been challenged over the past year by the increasing fragility of the child care system in our province. We have heard that families in B.C. who need child care have adjusted work life schedules and relied on relatives, friends or neighbours. Only some families have been lucky enough to first find, and then be able to afford, high quality licensed child care settings within their neighbourhoods.

The research is clear: high quality child care environments are essential to our society's future health, welfare and economic prosperity. It is now widely recognized that early learning and care supports life-long learning as well as women's equality and crime and poverty prevention.

Council's vision for British Columbia is that we are a province where all children, irrespective of race, religion, ability, geographic location or socio-economic status have the right to be in a high quality, safe and caring environment which nurtures their growth.

Transferring the responsibility for Child Care Programs to the Ministry of Children and Family Development is an excellent way to enhance policy development, planning and coordination at both the provincial and the community levels, as well as integrating child care as the core of early childhood development that it is. We look forward to the review of all child care programs and policies and the opportunity to address long term challenges in a fresh way.

The work of Council in the coming year will be to support the Honourable Minister Hagen and staff in the implementation of transitional strategies that are designed to move us effectively into the beginnings of a 10-year plan. We are encouraged by the federal government's increased commitment to child care and our advice for the provincial plan will address the QUAD criteria (Quality, Universality, Accessibility, Developmentally appropriate) as laid out by the federal government.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the vision and passion of many champions across B.C., and across Canada: those who continue to hold high the child care torch for all to see. The positive changes and opportunities that face us today are a direct result of the unfailing commitment of those who educate, inspire and remain dedicated to reaching the goal that Canada is a country where we take collective responsibility for ensuring that our young have every opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Wendy Cooper

Council's Mandate

The Provincial Child Care Council was created in May 1993, by the Minister of Women's Equality, to provide advice and expertise about child care to the Minister.

In 1997, the responsibility for child care was transferred from the Ministry of Women's Equality to the Ministry for Children and Families. In July 1999, the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development & Economic Security. In June 2001, the responsibility was transferred to the Ministry for Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

In April 2001, the new *Child Care BC Act* was passed. The new Act describes the Provincial Child Care Council in the following way:

(1) In this section, "council" means the Provincial Child Care Council continued under this Act.
(2) The council may make recommendations
(a) to the minister about child care under this Act, and
(b) to the minister responsible for the *BC Benefits (Child Care Subsidy) Act* about child care subsidies under that Act.
(3) The council consists of at least 14 and not more than 21 members, each of whom is appointed by the minister and one or more of whom is designated by the minister to chair council meetings.
(4) The minister may set the term of office of any member of the council.
(5) The minister may
(a) reimburse the members for reasonable travelling and out of pocket expenses necessarily incurred by them in attending council meetings, and
(b) pay the members a fee set by the minister in accordance with the general directives of Treasury Board.

Council's Vision

At its inaugural meeting in May 1993, Council created a vision of child care for British Columbia:

- linkages between families, communities and government about child care issues,
- province-wide communication,
- a greater responsibility for child care accepted by society,
- an understanding and valuing of diversity,
- clarity in the partnerships between ministries that have an interest in child care,
- new initiatives to create partnerships with other ministries,
- coordination of all government child care initiatives,
- care for the caregiver,
- increased access to early childhood education training,
- employer roles and employee responsibilities,
- barriers to quality care identified and become a catalyst for change,
- changes to the child care system driven

by what is important for families,

- quality care everywhere, and
- inter-provincial bridges that connect early childhood care and education systems into a national child care and education agenda.

Principles of Child Care

Council has identified a series of principles to guide evaluation of new directions in child care in B.C.

- A commitment to the recommendations contained in the Child Care Task Force Report "Showing We Care" as the guiding document for change.
- Changes to the child care subsidy system that removes the "welfare" stigma associated with the present system.
- Development of a new "made in B.C. program" that includes the needs of all children, parents and child care providers regardless of location, ethnic origin or need for supports.
- Stabilization of the child care delivery system by addressing the pressing financial and administrative constraints that child care is presently experiencing.
- Implementation of ministry-led child care initiatives, which result in net benefit or improvement to the overall quality of child care in the province.
- Development of community infrastructure in a manner that enhances parents' ability to gain access to affordable, quality child care.

During the next year the Provincial Child Care Council will be working with the Minister on the development of a long term plan for child care in B.C.

Council's Role

While most Council members are not official representatives of the specific organizations or regions where they work, volunteer and live, they do feel accountable to the constituencies from which they come. Council members deeply value their connection and communication with the community. It is invaluable in informing them about the day-to-day impact of the policies and programs that are discussed at the Council meetings. Points of view from communities across the province are seriously considered in any advice or recommendations made to the Minister.

At the same time, Council members are concerned about their ability to live up to community expectations about their role as advocates at the Council table. Council is not a decision-making body and does not have the ability to 'fix things.' Council members can and do offer their best advice to those who do make the decisions.

Council found a definition of advocacy, offered by B.C.'s Child, Youth and Family Advocate, helpful.

"Put most simply — effective advocacy is about welcoming people into the decision-making process by ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in decisions that are made about their lives. When this is done well, better decisions are made."

While Council is not mandated to address the specific concerns of individuals, children, families or caregivers, it does have a responsibility to ensure that a wide range of voices and opinions are heard and considered in the policy decisions that are made about child care. Council members see this as a positive and constructive approach and are committed to continuing to reflect the views heard from the community in the advice that it offers to the Minister. In this way, advocacy will continue to be an important part of the work undertaken.

Council Meetings

Council held three meetings over the year.

May 22, 2003
September 26, 2003
January 23, 2004

Highlights of Council's Meetings:

- Minister of State for Women's Equality and the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development met with Council and discussed linkages between child care and early childhood development.
- Council met with delegates of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Review Team on Early Childhood Education and Care Policy.
- Presentation by First Call to Council and Minister of State for Women's Equality on their Early Childhood Development Framework.
- Presentation was made to Council on the findings from the 2003 Parent Child Care Needs Assessment Survey.
- Discussion and development of recommendations on the F/P/T Multi-lateral Early Learning and Child Care funding.
- Discussion and monitoring of the impacts of budget and policy changes to the Child Care Subsidy Program.
- Monitoring and development of recommendations regarding the provincial allocation of federal Early Childhood Development funds.
- Council continues to support their *5 Year Child Care Plan for B.C.* (2002/2003)
- Council continues to monitor the development of Supported Child Care services throughout the province.

Advocacy/Advice:

- Inter-ministerial connection
- Provincial infrastructure
- Infant/toddler space development/sustained
- Stabilization and growth
- Accountability
- Increased quality and increased quality option

About Council Members

Council members are appointed by government for an initial one-year term of office and may be re-appointed for further two year and three year terms. Members are drawn from a number of communities and different sectors, providing a diverse and comprehensive representation to council.

Name	Affiliation	Community
Wendy Cooper, Chair	Private Operator/Multi-care Facility	Coquitlam
Lorraine Aitken	Supported Child Care	Courtenay
Oscar Allueva	Multi-service Agency	Vancouver
Maryann Bird	Advocacy	West Vancouver
Donna Chang	School Age Child Care	East Vancouver
Betty Cleland	Preschool	Kelowna
Gurcharan Dhillion	Multi-cultural/Immigrants	Abbotsford
Clyde Hertzman	Academic/Early Childhood Development Research	Vancouver
Mabel Louie	Aboriginal Child Care	Vanderhoof
Christine MacLeod	Family Child Care	Delta
Heather Northrup	Founding Member of Parents for Child Care Association	Vancouver
Anne Marie Prediger	Early Childhood Educators	Prince George
Coco Schau	Child Care Resource and Referral	Terrace
Andrew Wynn Williams	BC Chamber of Commerce	Vancouver